

## Section 6. Oceanic Emergency Procedures

### 10-6-1. APPLICATION

The procedures in this section are to be used solely in oceanic airspace.

### 10-6-2. PHASES OF EMERGENCY

Emergency phases are described as follows:

a. Uncertainty phase (INCERFA). When there is concern about the safety of an aircraft or its occupants, an INCERFA exists:

1. When communication from an aircraft has not been received within 30 minutes after the time a communication should have been received or after the time an unsuccessful attempt to establish communication with such aircraft was first made, whichever is earlier; or

2. When an aircraft fails to arrive within 30 minutes after the time of arrival last estimated by the pilot or by the ATC units, whichever is later.

b. Alert phase (ALERFA). When there is apprehension about the safety of an aircraft and its occupants, an ALERFA exists:

1. Following the uncertainty phase when subsequent attempts to establish communications with the aircraft, or inquiries to other relevant sources have failed to reveal any information about the aircraft; or

2. When information has been received which indicates that the operating efficiency of the aircraft has been impaired but not to the extent that a forced landing is likely; or

3. When communication from an aircraft has not been received within 60 minutes after the time a communication should have been received or after the time an unsuccessful attempt to establish communication with such aircraft was first made, whichever is earlier.

c. Distress phase (DETRESFA). When there is reasonable certainty that the aircraft and its occupants are threatened by grave and imminent danger, a DETRESFA exists:

1. Following the alert phase when further attempts to establish communications with the aircraft and more widespread inquiries are unsuccessful; or

2. When the fuel on board is considered to be exhausted or to be insufficient for the aircraft to reach safety; or

3. When information is received which indicates that the operating efficiency of the aircraft has been impaired to the extent that a forced landing is likely; or

4. When information is received or it is reasonably certain that the aircraft is about to make or has made a forced landing.

### 10-6-3. ALERTING SERVICE AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

a. Provide alerting service to:

1. All aircraft receiving ATC service;

2. All other aircraft which have filed a flight plan or which are otherwise known to the ATC unit; and

3. Any aircraft known or believed to be the subject of unlawful interference.

b. When alerting service is required, the responsibility for coordinating such service shall, unless otherwise established by letter of agreement, rest with the facility serving the FIR or CTA:

1. Within which the aircraft was flying at the time of last air-ground radio contact; or

2. Which the aircraft was about to enter if the last air-ground contact was established at or close to the boundary; or

3. Within which the point of destination is located if the aircraft:

(a) Was not equipped with suitable two-way radio communications equipment; or

(b) Was not under obligation to transmit position reports.

#### REFERENCE-

FAAO 7110.65, Chapter 8, Section 2, Coordination.

c. The responsible Area Control Center (ACC) shall serve as the control point for:

1. Collecting all information relevant to a state of emergency of an aircraft;

2. Forwarding that information to the appropriate RCC; and

3. Coordinating with other facilities concerned.

**d.** The responsibility of the ACC to provide alerting service for military aircraft may be waived upon a written or recorded request from a military agency. In this case, the military request must state that the military agency assumes full responsibility for their aircraft while the aircraft are operating in the oceanic airspace.

**e.** Responsibility to provide alerting service for flight operations conducted under the "due regard" or "operational" prerogative of military aircraft is assumed by the military. When "due regard" operations are scheduled to end with aircraft filed under ICAO procedures, the ACC may, if specified in a letter of agreement, assume responsibility for alerting service at proposed time filed.

**f.** In the event of INCERFA, ALERFA, or DETRESFA, notify the following:

1. When practicable, the aircraft operator.
2. The appropriate RCC.

3. Aeronautical stations having en route communications guard responsibilities at the point of departure, along or adjacent to the route of flight, and at the destination.

4. ACC's having jurisdiction over the proposed route of flight from the last reported position to the destination airport.

**g.** INCERFA, ALERFA, and DETRESFA messages shall include the following information, if available, in the order listed:

1. INCERFA, ALERFA, or DETRESFA according to the phase of the emergency.
2. Agency and person originating the message.
3. Nature of the emergency.
4. Significant flight plan information.
5. The air traffic unit which made the last radio contact, the time, and the frequency used.
6. The aircraft's last position report, how it was received, and what facility received it.
7. Color and distinctive marks of aircraft.
8. Any action taken by reporting office.
9. Other pertinent remarks.

**h.** An INCERFA phase ends with the receipt of any information or position report on the aircraft. Cancel the INCERFA by a message addressed to the same stations as the INCERFA message.

**1. An ALERFA ends when:**

(a) Evidence exists that would ease apprehension about the safety of the aircraft and its occupants; or

(b) The concerned aircraft lands. Cancel the ALERFA message by a message addressed to the same stations as the ALERFA message.

**2. A DETRESFA ends when the:**

(a) Aircraft successfully lands; or

(b) RCC advises of a successful rescue; or

(c) RCC advises of termination of SAR activities. Cancel the DETRESFA by a message addressed to the same stations as the DETRESFA message.

**i.** A separate chronological record should be kept on each ALERFA and DETRESFA together with a chart which displays the projected route of the aircraft, position reports received, route of interceptor aircraft, and other pertinent information.

#### 10-6-4. INFLIGHT CONTINGENCIES

**a.** If an aircraft over water requests weather, sea conditions, ditching information, and/or assistance from surface vessels, or if the controller feels that this information may be necessary for aircraft safety, it should be requested from the RCC. Also, an appropriate AMVER SURPIC should be asked for if requested by the aircraft or deemed beneficial by control personnel.

**NOTE-**

*The AMVER Center can deliver, in a matter of minutes, a SURPIC of vessels in the area of a SAR incident, including their predicted positions and their characteristics.*

**b.** In all cases of aircraft ditching, the airspace required for SAR operations shall be determined by the RCC. The ACC shall block that airspace until the RCC advises the airspace is no longer required. An International Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) shall be issued describing the airspace affected.

**c.** The following actions will be taken in the event an aircraft must make an emergency descent:

**1.** In the event an aircraft requests an emergency descent:

(a) Issue a clearance to the requested altitude if approved separation can be provided.

(b) Advise the aircraft of the traffic, and request its intentions if traffic prevents an unrestricted descent.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

*ATC ADVISES (aircraft identification) UNABLE TO APPROVE UNRESTRICTED DESCENT.*

*TRAFFIC (traffic information).  
REQUEST INTENTIONS.*

2. In the event an aircraft is making or will make an emergency descent without a clearance:

(a) Advise other aircraft of the emergency descent.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

*ATC ADVISES (aircraft identification/all aircraft) BE ALERT FOR EMERGENCY DESCENT IN THE VICINITY OF (latitude/longitude) FROM (altitude/FL) TO (altitude/FL).*

(b) Advise other aircraft when the emergency descent is complete.

**PHRASEOLOGY-**

*(Aircraft identification/all aircraft) EMERGENCY DESCENT AT (location) COMPLETED.*

3. Upon notification that an aircraft is making an emergency descent through other traffic, take action immediately to safeguard all aircraft concerned.

4. When appropriate, broadcast by ATC communications, by radio navigation aids, and/or through aeronautical communication stations/services an emergency message to all aircraft in the vicinity of the descending aircraft. Include the following information:

- (a) Location of emergency descent.
- (b) Direction of flight.
- (c) Type aircraft.
- (d) Route if appropriate.
- (e) Altitude vacated.
- (f) Other information.

**EXAMPLE-**

*"Attention all aircraft in the vicinity of Trout, a northbound D-C Ten on A-T-S Route Alfa Seven Hundred is making an emergency descent from flight level three three zero." (Repeat as you deem appropriate.)*

5. If traffic conditions permit, provide traffic information to the affected aircraft.

6. Immediately after an emergency broadcast or traffic information has been made, issue appropriate clearances or instructions, as necessary, to all aircraft involved.

**10-6-5. SERVICES TO RESCUE AIRCRAFT**

a. Provide standard IFR separation between the SAR and the aircraft in distress, except when visual or radar contact has been established by the search and rescue aircraft and the pilots of both aircraft concur, IFR separation may be discontinued.

b. Clear the SAR aircraft to a fixed clearance limit rather than to the aircraft in distress, which is a moving fix. Issue route clearances that are consistent with that of the distressed aircraft.

c. Advise the rescue aircraft, as soon as practicable, of any factors that could adversely affect its mission; e.g., unfavorable weather conditions, anticipated problems, the possibility of not being able to approve an IFR descent through en route traffic, etc.

d. Advise the appropriate rescue agency of all pertinent information as it develops.

e. Forward immediately any information about the action being taken by the RCC, other organizations, or aircraft to the aircraft concerned.

f. Advise the aircraft operator of the current status of the SAR operation as soon as practicable.

g. Since prompt, correct, and complete information is the key to successful rescue operations, ensure that this information is swiftly and smoothly supplied to those organizations actively engaged in rescue operations.